

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
EB-08 AID-05 /081 W
-----029974 052302Z /61

P R 052008Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7816
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CO
SUBJ: POLITICAL SUMMARIES: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT LOPEZ REPLACED THE LABOR MINISTER WHO RESIGNED RECENTLY FOLLOWING A SCANDAL. THE LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE'S NEPHEW, NAMED IN A CBS TELEVISION PROGRAM ON DRUG TRAFFICKING, INTENDS TO FILE SUIT IN THE U.S. U.S.-COLOMBIAN COOPERATION LED TO A MAJOR DRUG BUST. LABOR ORGANIZATIONS' MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS WERE ORDERLY AND THE UTC ENDED ITS ANNUAL CONGRESS WITH NO MAJOR SURPRISES. DIVISIONS WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY CONTINUE WITH THE APPARENT ENCOURAGEMENT OF FORMER PRESIDENT LLERAS. LIBERAL CANDIDATE TURBAY OUTLINED HIS INTENDED PETROLEUM POLICY WHICH WOULD GIVE THE PETROLEUM SECTOR GREATER FLEXIBILITY. MAY DAY DISTURBANCES PROVOKED BY TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS ADDED TO PUBLIC SECURITY PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. NEW LABOR MINISTER NAMED. PRESIDENT LOPEZ NAMED ALVARISTA
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CONSERVATIVE JUAN RESTREPO LONDONO AS HIS NEW LABOR AND SOCIAL SECURITY MINISTER (SEPTEL). RESTREPO IS A BUSINESS-MAN FROM ANTIOQUIA AND A FORMER SENATOR AND BANKER WITH DEGREES IN LAW AND ECONOMICS. RESTREPO, THE THIRD LABOR MINISTER IN LOPEZ' ADMINISTRATION, REPLACES OSCAR MONTOYA WHO RESIGNED LAST WEEK (BOGOTA 4055).

3. CBS SCANDAL DIES HARD.

ANIBAL TURBAY, THE NEPHEW OF THE LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, WHO WAS ACCUSED OF INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG TRAFFICKING IN A CBS TELEVISION PROGRAM (BOGOTA 3570), ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAS HIRED AMERICAN ATTORNEY DAVID ISENBERG TO FILE SUIT IN THE U.S. WITHIN TWO WEEKS AGAINST CBS OR, DEPENDING ON THE SOURCE OF CBS' INFORMATION, AGAINST THE USG. ISENBERG, WHO WAS VISITING COLOMBIA, CRITICIZED DEA ACTIVITIES IN COLOMBIA AND SAID THAT HE INTENDS TO QUESTION CBS REPORTERS ABOUT THEIR INFORMATION. COMMENT: THE SUIT BY TURBAY, IF FILED, COULD POSE PROBLEMS FOR THE USG IF THE LAWYERS INVOLVED SEEK CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS AND INTERVIEWS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

4. U.S. COOPERATES IN MAJOR DRUG RAID.

WITH INTELLIGENCE SUPPLIED BY DEA AND UTILIZING U.S.-DONATED HELICOPTERS, THE NEWLY ORGANIZED NARCOTICS UNIT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE ON APRIL 26 STAGED A RAID ON A CLANDESTINE AIR STRIP IN THE GUAJIRA (SEE BOGOTA 4198). AN ESTIMATED 574 TONS OF MARIJUANA WAS CONFISCATED AND DESTROYED, A WORLD RECORD FOR ONE OPERATION. IN ADDITION, A DC 7 AIRCRAFT AND SEVERAL VEHICLES WERE CONFISCATED. THIRTEEN PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED, INCLUDING THREE AMERICANS. COMMENT: THE SUCCESS OF THE OPERATION PROVIDES AN ADDITIONAL STIMULUS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S NARCOTIC UNIT AND IS INDICATIVE OF THE RESULTS THAT CAN BE OBTAINED THROUGH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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U.S.-COLOMBIAN COOPERATION IN THE NARCOTICS FIELD.

5. JOINT MAY DAY DEMONSTRATIONS ARE ORDERLY; UTC ENDS CONGRESS. THE FOUR MAJOR LABOR CONFEDERATIONS WHICH FORM THE NATIONAL LABOR COUNCIL JOINED FORCES FOR THE FIRST TIME TO CELEBRATE MAY DAY IN RALLIES IN BOGOTA AND OTHER MAJOR CITIES. THE DEMONSTRATIONS GENERALLY WERE ORDERLY, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL VIOLENT INCIDENTS DID OCCUR THROUGHOUT THE NATION (SEE PAR 8). LABOR LEADERS CRITICIZED THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION FOR FAILING TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE WORKERS. LEFTIST UNIONISTS ALSO CALLED FOR GREATER LABOR UNITY AND ACCUSED DOMESTIC MONOPOLIES AND U.S. MULTINATIONALS OF EXPLOITING COLOMBIAN LABOR. THE UNION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (UTC) CLOSED ITS ANNUAL CONGRESS ON THE SAME DAY, HAVING REELECTED TULIO CUEVAS AS PRESIDENT (SEPTEL). ALVARO RAMIREZ, THE PRESIDENT OF UTRACUN, WHO HAD BEEN AT ODDS WITH CUEVAS FOR SOME TIME, WAS CHOSEN AS FIRST VICE PRESIDENT IN AN APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL MOVE TOWARD RECONCILIATION.

6. LLERAS CONTINUES ATTACKS ON TURBAY CANDIDACY.

TURBULENCE CAUSED BY EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS AND HIS SUPPORTERS INCREASED IN THE LIBERAL PARTY. ALTHOUGH LLERAS

MAY HAVE RETIRED FROM POLITICAL OFFICE SEEKING, HE AND HIS FOLLOWERS CONTINUE TO LAUNCH DIRECT OR INDIRECT ATTACKS AGAINST LIBERAL CANDIDATE TURBAY FROM LLERAS' WEEKLY NUEVA FRONTERA AND THE HOSPITABLE PAGES OF THE DAILY EL ESPECTADOR. LLERAS THIS WEEK CONTINUED TO FOCUS ON THE ALLEGEDLY ILLEGAL PLACEMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY FUNDS BY FORMER LABOR MINISTER MONTOYA AND THE PRESENT HEALTH MINISTER WITH THE FINANCIAL GROUP CONTROLLED BY TURBAY'S CLOSE ADVISOR AND BACKER, JAIME MICHELSSEN. BESIDES THE ISSUE OF ILLEGALITY, LLERAS CALLED INTO QUESTION THE SERIOUSNESS OF TURBAY'S STAND AGAINST THE CONCENTRATION OF CAPITAL IN THE HANDS OF A FEW, WHILE MICHELSSEN APPEARED AS ONE OF THE CHIEF CULPRITS OF SUCH CONCENTRATION. TWO LLERAS LIBERAL SENATORS ALSO DIRECTED PUBLIC ATTACKS ON TURBAY'S CANDIDACY. ALTHOUGH THE IMPACT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THESE ATTACKS ON LIBERAL PARTY UNITY AND ON TURBAY'S CAMPAIGN IS PROBABLY NOT GREAT, THE PARTY'S FAITHFUL EL TIEMPO HAS DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE SPACE, INCLUDING MOST OF ITS EDITORIAL PAGE ON MAY 3, TO DEPLORING THESE ATTEMPTS TO CREATE DIVISIONISM IN THE PARTY'S RANKS. PRIVATELY, MANY MAINSTREAM LIBERALS (TURBAYISTAS) ARE FURIOUS OVER WHAT THEY SEE AS CARLOS LLERAS' PERSISTENCE IN PURSUING HIS ANTI-TURBAY VENDETTA AND FOR STIRRING UP OTHERS, AS WELL.

7. TURBAY OUTLINES HIS PETROLEUM POLICY.

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TURBAY OUTLINED HIS PROPOSALS FOR A NEW PETROLEUM POLICY. THEY CONTAIN FEW CHANGES TO EXISTING POLICIES, BUT ADD SOME FEATURES THAT WOULD PROBABLY BE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO COLOMBIA'S PETROLEUM SECTOR. EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES WOULD REMAIN AS AT PRESENT, WITH THE ADDITION OF PRODUCTION SHARING FOR AREAS WITH HIGH COSTS AND RISKS. UNDER PRODUCTION SHARING, UNLIKE THE PRESENT ASSOCIATION CONTRACTS, ECOPETROL WOULD NOT HAVE TO CONTRIBUTE TO DEVELOPMENT OR EXPLORATION COSTS. TURBAY ALSO SAID THAT HE WOULD REMOVE INTERNAL PRICE SUBSIDIES ON PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND, THROUGH MARKET INCENTIVES, CHANGE THE PREDOMINANT FORM OF INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE IN USE TO DIESEL.

8. MAY DAY DISTURBANCES ADD TO PUBLIC UNEASE.

TERRORISTS COMMEMORATED MAY DAY WITH ABOUT A DOZEN MINOR BOMBINGS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. NO ONE WAS INJURED IN THE EXPLOSIONS WHICH CAUSED ONLY LIGHT DAMAGE. BOGOTA OFFICES OF BOTH THE CONSERVATIVE AND LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ALSO WERE DAMAGED, AS WERE THE BUCARAMANGA AND CALI HEADQUARTERS OF INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE GENERAL (RET.) VALENCIA TOVAR. OTHER MINOR VIOLENT INCIDENTS RELATED TO MAY DAY OCCURRED IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. ASIDE FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE MAY DAY PROBLEMS, ALLEGED MEMBERS OF THE M-19 TERRORIST GROUP BRIEFLY TOOK OVER AN OFFICE OF THE LABOR MINISTRY, DAMAGING PROPERTY AND HARANGUING EMPLOYEES. TWO APPARENTLY NEW GROUPS WERE ALSO HEARD FROM. THE "UNIFIED WORKERS COMMAND", WHICH MAY BE NOTHING MORE THAN A MASK FOR COMMON CRIMINALS, ROBBED A GOVERNMENT OFFICE, AND THE "ABSTENTIONIST BRIGADES" CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACK ON VALENCIA'S BUCA-RAMANGA OFFICE. ASENCIO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 may 1978
Decapton Date: 01 jan 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BOGOTA04226
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780193-0093
Format: TEL
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780591/aaaaczd.c.tel
Line Count: 183
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 66e1cba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2785909
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL SUMMARIES: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA
TAGS: PINT, CO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/66e1cba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014